

## Churches in Highlands Ranch, Colo., and Folsom, Calif., share their resources and business expertise to advance the Gospel, train leaders and elevate the poor in Mozambique.

# Mozambique

## Getting Down to Business

By Christy Scannell

As four American businessmen gathered for prayer in Mozambique earlier this year, it happened—a “victory moment,” as Gene Kissinger calls it.

Kissinger, outreach pastor at Cherry Hills Community Church in Highlands Ranch, Colo., had accompanied the group halfway around the world not to build houses, teach Bible school or provide health care. Instead, the men had taken five days from their busy schedules to go to Africa and do what they do best—look at accounting, assess spending and evaluate income for a missionary-run business.

The “moment” happened as Kissinger was leading the group in a spiritual debriefing at the end of the trip.

“One of the guys, almost with tears said, ‘I never thought God could use my business skills for His purposes,’” Kissinger says, his voice cracking at the memory. “And we all said, ‘Thank you, Lord, for opening our eyes to that.’”

It’s this realization that motivates Bruce Swanson, director of Transformational Ventures, a WorldVenture initiative that seeks to connect businesspeople with missions needs around the world.

“The church and missions have really squandered an incredible amount of resources in the businesspeople at churches,” Swanson says. “There are successful businesspeople that traditional missionary work just doesn’t touch. So business as mission is a way to impact people economically, lift people out of poverty, while showing God’s love to them in the way they’re treated. And also, business as mission is a way to connect with and impact higher-level types of businesspeople.”

Swanson works with churches and individuals—an online survey at TransformationalVentures.com matches skills with needs—to better understand how business knowledge and ability can bring Christ to a community as effectively as more traditional methods.

“We look at it as really following Jesus’ pattern,” he says. “He didn’t only preach, He healed and dealt with people’s needs. We’re following in that trajectory of holistic ministry and paying attention to the economic well-being of a person.”

### The Birth of MozOvos in Folsom

The importance of considering the economic well-being of people became abundantly clear to missionaries Rodger and Lynn Schmidt, who seven years ago followed a call to Mozambique. They successfully immersed themselves in Mozambican culture for three years and started a church that attracts about 100 people to services each week. But their larger goal—to bring young men together in community and train them in

leadership—was failing because of the harsh realities of the country’s economy. With a population of 22 million, 75 percent of whom are under age 25, and 90 percent simply living off the land, the average Mozambican struggles to survive without basic food, shelter and clothing. The Schmidts didn’t just need to train these young people to lead and proclaim the Gospel message—they needed to create a place where the training could be used in a way that financially supported and sustained the effort so these young Mozambican leaders could pursue a lifetime in missions.

“As we were planning it became quite clear that funding such an expensive community-based ministry would be very difficult,” Rodger says. “We also came to believe strongly that leadership development and theological education were losing their impact as many of the young people being taught could do very little with the good information once they finished their studies. We believe that helping young people sustain their lifestyle while doing ministry in practical ways is much more transformational.”

After researching business possibilities, Rodger decided an egg business—people in Maputo, Mozambique’s capital city, eat 800,000 eggs per day, 650,000 of which are imported—would be a viable way for the interns to learn leadership skills and generate money for the program. In 2006, the Schmidts returned to the United States for six months, visiting churches and looking to increase financial support for their new initiative.

One of the places they called on was Lakeside Church in Folsom, Calif. The 2,500-member congregation had been financially backing the Schmidts for three years as one of many missionary families the church supported, but Rodger was looking for something more—and, coincidentally, so was Lakeside.

“[Lead Pastor] Brad [Franklin] had really been emphasizing this idea of ‘more Christians, better Christians’ and that we should be actively involved in missions,” says Jeff Kreiser, Lakeside’s pastor of outreach. “We wanted to mobilize everyone at Lakeside to active mission involvement, and we were getting higher involvement but not full involvement. There were some missing pieces—we weren’t reaching everyone [in the congregation].”

The Schmidts stayed in Folsom for six weeks, which not only allowed church members to form relationships with them, but gave Kreiser and Rodger time to develop a long-term strategy for Lakeside’s interaction with the Schmidts and their new egg business. The two developed a multipage business/ministry partnership agreement (available for download on the church’s website, LakesideChurch.com) to spell out expectations from both sides, leaving the document general enough that both the Schmidts and the church could use it with other potential partners.



THE MOZOVOS EGG BUSINESS PROVIDES A VIABLE WAY TO BRING MOZAMBICAN INTERNS TOGETHER AND TRAIN THEM FOR LEADERSHIP, WHILE GENERATING MONEY FOR THE PROGRAM.



That process, Kreiser says, intensified Lakeside's commitment to the Schmidts.

"After that, we really began to consider them our international staff that are deployed elsewhere," he says. "We are a true home church to them."

In addition to increasing its funding of the Schmidts' ministry to 30 percent of their total need, Lakeside Church's businesspeople pledged capital and mentoring for the egg business, involvement in the internship program and personal support for the Schmidt family.

"It's the whole package," Rodger says about the partnership. "No longer are we . . . [just] a line item on the church budget."

In 2008, with \$250,000 from Lakeside businesspeople, the Schmidts launched MozOvos, an egg production company. The 4,000-hen venture hasn't been without challenges—one hen supplier went bankrupt, costing MozOvos \$22,000—nor is it completely sustaining the internship program, but it is promising enough that the Schmidts are laying groundwork for a similar operation in remote northern Mozambique, a region virtually devoid of the Gospel.

Rodger says Lakeside Church's willingness to sustain the mission allowed him the freedom to take a chance on his vision.

"The counsel, mentoring and encouragement of the leadership and its members gave us the resources and courage to dare to think outside the box, try something new and make a difference in a way that had never been tried before, at least in Mozambique," he says. "Like in any relationship, the more you risk and the more you do together with purpose and passion creates a bond that is unique and really special."

### Building Relationships in Missions

Part of that bond has been between Lakeside's young people and the nine Mozambican men who live, work and worship with the Schmidts through their International Internship in Mission program. One of the six Lakeside short-term mission teams that has traveled to Mozambique was a duo of 21-year-olds who were paired with Mozambican interns for a week.

On arriving, the Americans were carted off by their partners on a tour of Maputo via public transportation. The day culminated with a visit to a market where they bought a live chicken to take back to the mission site for dinner.

"There we were on a crowded bus, and I was trying to hold this chicken by its wings and keep it from flying around," says Jon Ingraham, one of the Lakeside men matched with an intern, chuckling at the memory. "But it was a great experience to get out of your comfort zone, take away the barriers and really bond with a person right from the start."

Ingraham, who had already worked a year at a mission project in Mexico, says the relational aspect of missions is as important to upholding a ministry as constructing buildings or teaching Bible lessons would be.

"I was there to give [the intern] encouragement that God is faithful and [the intern] is doing a good job," Ingraham says.

Rodger sees the impact as two-sided, a reflection of the value of that long-term partnership with Lakeside.

"They didn't come to 'do ministry,'" he says about the young Americans. "There was no agenda outside of getting the chance to be challenged by young African men about what it means to be young and African and have a passion for the Lord and His work."

### Coming Alongside for a 'Much Better Business'

Like Lakeside Church, the 6,500-attendeed Cherry Hills Community Church supported the Schmidts financially for several years without a deeper involvement in their ministry. Then as with Brad Franklin at Lakeside, Cherry Hills' senior pastor, Jim Dixon, began stressing his vision for a congregation mobilized to serve together in missions. For a handful of businesspeople in the church, that meant finding a way to use their skills in furthering missions. But after a few years of monthly meetings, the group hadn't found a project on which it could focus.

A visit from Transformational Ventures' Bruce Swanson changed that. "He said, 'It's right in front of you—the Schmidts!'" Gene Kissinger recalls. "And as we looked at [MozOvos], we realized here was this opportunity that God could allow us to do something exciting with the help of a lot of people who came before us."

In March, Kissinger and four Cherry Hills businessmen arrived in Mozambique for five days.

"The [business] guys went into problem-solving mode right away and, I think, really challenged Rodger to think in new ways with new lenses," Kissinger says. "A lot of [the discussion] was this tension between 'Is this a ministry?' or 'Is this a business?' and what that means in regard to borrowing money as a way to expand the business."

Rodger says it is this kind of focused, short-term mission visit that most boosts his ministry.

"Their sole purpose was to help us do business better," he says. "MozOvos is a much better business and more profitable because of their expertise, discipline and ongoing help to follow up."

Since then, two of the Cherry Hills businessmen who went on the trip have continued to communicate with Rodger and advise him. The larger monthly group is building on the Mozambique experience to find more places for their talents, and the Cherry Hills church will host a business as mission conference in 2011.

"The opportunities to be involved in business as mission are unlimited, and this was a small example of that," Kissinger says about the Mozambique trip.

But even more than opening up a model for how businesspeople can be used in missions, he says, the experience showed how a church can mine its members' gifts to approach missions more effectively.

"Let's not keep doing things the way we do them because that's the way we do them," he says. "Let's look deeper in our congregation. Our hope is we will have men and women in the church who will say, 'Where are the tough places in the world where ministry needs to take place and how can I use my skills to be generating something new?'"

The Schmidts' International Internship in Mission will graduate its first six interns in November. Two will stay on with the program while the other four will either enroll in a university or work in missions elsewhere in Mozambique. ✂

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